

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THE DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE ASH‘ARĪS AND MĀTURĪDĪS

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You should know that Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī is the Imām of Ahl al-Sunna and at their forefront, followed by Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī. Know also – as some of our Shaykhs have mentioned to us, may Allah have mercy upon them – that the companions of al-Shāfi‘ī and his followers follow him (Abū al-Ḥasan) in matters of doctrine, and follow al-Shāfi‘ī in matters of law. The companions of Abū Ḥanīfa follow Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr in doctrine and follow Abū Ḥanīfa in law. This is what our Shaykhs have imparted to us. And we beseech Allah, the Exalted, asking Him to grant these two noble Imāms a generous reward for what they have expended of sincere advice to the Muslims. We beseech Allah, the Exalted, asking Him to include us among those perform the actions of those granted Divine success: those who traverse the path of the rightly-guided and realized ones; by His largess, bounty, and generosity – Amen! There is no contention between the two Shaykhs and their followers except in twelve issues.²

One: al-Māturīdī said that *Takwīn* [creation] is an eternal attribute that subsists with Allah’s Being, as do all of His attributes, and that it is distinct from that which is brought into existence [*mukawwan*], and that it is linked with that which is brought into existence in the world and every part of it [the world] from the time of its inception. Just as Allah’s Will is eternal and linked with that which is willed at the time of its existence, so too is His eternal omnipotence [linked] with that which is decreed.³

Al-Ash‘arī said that it is a contingent attribute that does not subsist with Allah’s being, and according to him it is from the attributes of action and not from the eternal attributes. As he saw it, the attributes of

¹ Ibn Kamāl Pāshā (died 940 *Hijrī*) was one of the great scholars and polymaths of the Ottoman Empire. He was a contemporary of al-Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī and both scholars became famous for their vast knowledge. Comparisons were made between the knowledge and depth of Pāshā and al-Suyūṭī, and most scholars concluded that both were nearly equal, with al-Suyūṭī having more mastery in the Ḥadīth sciences, and with Pāshā having more mastery in the rational sciences. [t]

² “It is not hidden to the reader that the scholars mentioned more than this number of issues over which there is disagreement. It seems however that the author chose to limit them to this number due to their obvious nature.” (Sh. Sa‘īd Foudah: *Sharḥ Risāla al-Ikhtilāf bayn al-Ash‘arī wa al-Māturīdīyya*, 12)

³ “In other words, *Takwīn* is a pre-eternal attribute that subsists with Allah and has a contingently effective lineage with that which is brought into existence at the time it is brought into being. For this reason, the scholars say that *Takwīn* is different from that which is brought into existence [*al-mukawwan*], because *Takwīn* is a pre-eternal attribute and that which is brought into existence is contingent. For this reason, the claim of some of the *hashawī* riff-raffs that the Māturīdīs agree with them that contingents subsist within Allah’s Entity is incorrect...this is fallacious because according to the Māturīdīs, *Takwīn* is pre-eternal and not contingent. It is not to be called an attribute in an unrestricted manner; rather it is an attribute from which actions issue forth...” (Ibid)

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action are all contingent, such as *Takwīn* and bringing into existence and the emergence of the world with the statement ﴿be﴾.⁴

Two: al-Māturīdī said that the speech of Allah, the Exalted, is not heard, rather what is heard is that which points to it.⁵ Al-Ash‘arī said that it is heard – as is well known in the story of Mūsā ﷺ. Ibn Fūrak said: “Two things are heard during the recitation of the reader: the voice of the reader, and the speech of Allah, the Exalted.” Al-Qāḍī [Abu Bakr] al-Bāqillānī said: “Allah’s speech is not heard in the conventional sense, rather; it is possible for Allah to allow any of His creation that He wills to hear [it] contrary to customary means and [contrary to it being] with the medium of letters and sound. Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī and those who follow him said: “Allah’s speech is not heard at all.” This was the chosen view of Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī – as found in *al-Bidāya*.

Three: al-Māturīdī said that the Creator of the universe is described with wisdom [*ḥikma*], whether that wisdom takes the meaning of knowledge [*‘ilm*] or the meaning of perfection/mastery [*ihkām*].⁶ Al-Ash‘arī said that if wisdom takes the meaning of knowledge then it is an eternal attribute that subsists with Allah’s Entity, exalted is He, and if it takes the meaning of perfection/mastery then it is a contingent quality akin to *Takwīn*, and the Entity of the Creator is not described with it.

Four: al-Māturīdī said that Allah wills obedience or disobedience for all beings, be they essences or accidents, however; obedience occurs by Allah’s will and decree and His pre-ordainment and predestination, pleasure, love, and command, and disobedience occurs by Allah’s will and decree and His predestination and pre-ordainment: not with His pleasure, love, or command. Al-Ash‘arī said that Allah’s love and pleasure are inclusive of all things just as His will.⁷

Five: According to al-Māturīdī, being legally ordered with that in which there is no capacity to endure is impermissible, whereas being burdened with that which can not be borne⁸ is permissible. According to al-Ash‘arī both are permissible.

Six: al-Māturīdī said that some of the rulings that relate to legal responsibility [*taklīf*] are known by the intellect, because the intellect is a tool by which the goodness and evil of some things can be

⁴ Therefore, according to al-Ash‘arī, *Takwīn* is a description for the self-same effective linkage of power by taking note of its effect, whereas according to al-Māturīdī, it is the pre-eternal attribute from which the creation and that which is brought into existence come...” (Ibid, 13)

⁵ “For al-Māturīdī, “that which is heard [*al-masmū‘*]” only applies that which connects with the sense of hearing...according to him, that which connects with it are the sounds that point to the pre-eternal attribute. As for the actual pre-eternal attribute, both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash‘arī held that it has no connection with the senses and that the senses have no connection with it. The disagreement is regarding a pre-eternal attribute being heard or not. For al-Māturīdī, hearing is conditioned upon the connection of the senses, and for that reason he denied that Inner Speech [*Kalām Nafsī*] can be heard...” (Ibid, 18)

⁶ Imām al-Māturīdī said that Allah, the Exalted, is described with wisdom and that wisdom is a description of Allah’s Entity. This refers either to the knowledge of the precise/perfected actions or it refers back to the pre-eternal attribute of *Takwīn* that al-Māturīdī affirmed. This means that mastery and precision are from the implications of *Takwīn*...” (Ibid, 19)

⁷ “As for Imām al-Ash‘arī, the Ustādh [Pāshā] reported that he believed that Allah’s love is inclusive of every accident, be it an act of obedience or an act of disobedience. This general statement suggests that Allah, the Exalted, loves disobedience. The correct view, however, is that this is not the doctrine of al-Ash‘arī. On the contrary, he said that Allah loves disobedience inasmuch as He punishes on account of it, just as He loves obedience inasmuch as He rewards on account of it. There is a distinction between this and what Ustādh Ibn Kamāl Pāshā and others mentioned and ascribed to al-Ash‘arī.” (Ibid, 29)

⁸ Al-Māturīdī distinguished between being legally ordered and being burdened. [t]

comprehended, and [it is a tool] by which the obligation of faith is comprehended, as well as [the obligation of] gratitude to the Giver of bounties. The One who makes this known and obligatory is Allah, the Exalted, however; it is through the medium of the intellect; just as the Messenger ﷺ made the obligation[s] known and the One who made [things] obligatory in reality is Allah, the Exalted, but it was through the medium of the Messenger ﷺ. He [al-Māturīdī] said: “No one is excused by ignorance of his Creator, due to what he sees in the creation of the heavens and earth”, and: “Had Allah not sent a Messenger [still] it would have been obligatory for the creation to know Him through their intellects.”

Al-Ash‘arī said that nothing is made an obligation or a prohibition except by the Sacred Law – not the intellect, even if the intellect is able to comprehend the goodness and evil of some things. According to al-Ash‘arī, all of the rulings that relate to legal responsibility are taken from revelation.

Seven: al-Māturīdī said that the wretched person could become felicitous and the felicitous person could become wretched. Al-Ash‘arī said that there is no consideration given to either felicity or wretchedness except during the end [i.e. death] and the requital.⁹

Eight: al-Māturīdī said that it is rationally impermissible for disbelief to be pardoned. Al-Ash‘arī said that it is rationally permissible but textually impermissible.¹⁰

Nine: al-Māturīdī said it is rationally and textually impermissible for the believers to abide eternally in the Hell-fire and for the disbelievers to abide in Paradise. Al-Ash‘arī said that it is rationally permissible, but textually impermissible.

Ten: Some of the Māturīdīs say that the name and the thing named [*al-ism wa al-musammā*] are one. Al-Ash‘arī believed that there is a distinction between the two and the “act of naming” [*tasmīya*]. Some of them divided a name into three categories: itself, other than itself, and a third category that is neither itself nor other than itself. There is agreement that the act of naming [*tasmīya*] is other than them [the name and the thing named], and it is what is established with the one named. This is taken from *Bidāya al-Kalām*.

Eleven: al-Māturīdī said that being male is a condition for Prophethood, and consequently, it is impermissible for a women to be a Prophetess. Al-Ash‘arī said that being male is not a condition for it, and that being female does not negate it. This is taken from *Bidāya al-Kalām*.

Twelve: Al-Māturīdī said that the action of the servant is called an acquisition and not creation, and that the action of the Real [Allah] is called creation and not acquisition – and both are inclusive of action. Al-Ash‘arī said that “action” denotes a real bringing into existence and the acquisition of the servant is called “action” only figuratively. It has been said: “That which is permissible for the All-Powerful to be singularly [described with] is called creation, and that which is impermissible for the All-Powerful to be described with is acquisition.”¹¹

⁹ According to al-Māturīdī, felicity is defined as Islam and wretchedness is defined as disbelief. According to al-Ash‘arī felicity is dying upon Islam and wretchedness is dying upon disbelief. [t]

¹⁰ Al-Ash‘arī’s view is based upon a rational judgement alone, whereas al-Māturīdī’s view is based on observation of Allah’s will. [t]

¹¹ The gist of this disagreement is that al-Ash‘arī held that the word “action” is literal when applied to Allah [that He is the Doer] and is figurative when applied to the servant. Al-Māturīdī on the other hand, held that the word “action” is also literal when applied to the servants. [t]